

FEARLESS



FEARLESS 68

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Simply to have lived and made
the work, and offered what beauty,
what comfort we could to the world.
No organization to belong to, no office
to hold, no grant or title that was
equal to the honor of being one of these.

This is the secret society of
western mythos, the magical society
we have sought life after life. That
Crowley sought and Gurdjieff. Society
of Anonymous Artists of the World.

- Diane di Prima

artwork: bruce colbert

Pacific Avenue Jazz

Pacific Avenue is cold and full of sleeping people
in the fog of November, with Coltrane playing
through my headphones
these are a few of my favorite things
i'm smoking a cigarette and waiting beside a statue
covered in crack cocaine residue
waiting for her to stop drinking from that bottle
in a stall in the ladies room at the public library
where I have several crushes on many of the
different librarians and a nemesis in
the film club's president,
a precocious young film buff like me
who actually has done something constructive
with an obsession unlike my wild, untamed forest
of dead end interests including her while I watch her
slowly disappear into thin air as we walk across
the train tracks downtown at the corner of first and pine,
but it was walking several blocks with my heart beating rapidly
to meet her for a movie or a quiet afternoon reading books
we didn't bother to check out that disappeared into the fog
of those late afternoons. I never go down Pacific Avenue
anymore since she died, a place that sounds like a haunted
theremin or high pitched, weather battered slide guitar
and the soft sound of her voice on the answering machine
in my endless calls to be sure she was safe until my brother
called to break the news to me that one of my favorite things
would now keep me waiting for eternity outside in the cold
ocean breeze, holding my jacket lapel up to fight the big chill
of all of my least favorite things.

Kevin Ridgeway

grief 1

it has wrapped itself
around us.

a coiled
sleeping
snake that watches.

my breath measured out.
seconds of a lifetime.

verbs collide.
the serpent shudders.

a ghost that

hijacks every
heartbeat. - kevin m. hibshman

poetry reels me in

like so many green,
yellow, and magenta fish
often do,

my eyes
follow the school
of disappearing mysteries,

my soul
stumbles over heartstrings,
unlaced and too long, down a slippery slope,

my hand
clutches freedom as it swims,
a song in the bag,

and i am happy knowing
it has everything it needs
to make it home, more than just alive.

eliana vanessa

grief it is
man

grief it is
man

grief it is
grief
man
grief

cesar

there is a little barbershop
in what's left
of the heart of Little Italy
where I get
what's left of
my hair faded
& my beard lined up
with a straight razor
for an extra five dollars

there's this guy
who is always hanging around
he pushes a broom
and brings customers
bottles of water
mostly he just stands around
and bullshits

Cesar
he's the owner
he is tall
like a mighty oak,
he is broad shouldered
a bald Latino
with a Harley tattoo
covering the back
of his skull
and I often wonder
what his rap sheet
looks like

the broom man
tells Cesar
his girl
wants him to
leave work early
to make it to a party
on time

Cesar either
doesn't take the hint

or
doesn't give a shit
and he says
to the broom man
"tell her
you'll leave her"

mary

Mary's tears came late
because death came early
she asked
"is 17 percent worth fighting for?"

were Mary a gambler
maybe sense she could make
of Monte Hall

weigh the value
of the nausea
& the infusions,
the smell of death
in the cancer ward

but Mary isn't a gambler
so she asks
no one in particular
if it's worth it
to flip a coin
for her life
without this misery

or to lean on
friends
&
machines
&
chemicals
&
gloved fingers
lacking delicacy
placing IVs

for a 67 percent chance
of dying
from
something
else

solitary ghost on tuesday morning

there was a ghost in my ear
this morning
I turned on the TV
to drown him out
but louder he
howled

I tried to write
to shut him up
but he
haunted the serifs
of every letter

I tried to sing
and play guitar
for my son
"Troubled
And
I
Don't
Know
Why"
but the ghost
was there
looking at me from
those little boy's eyes

I wept,
the ghost was gone.

poetry by luke kuzmish

Cousin Billy

died when a baseball hit him above the heart
during a little league game in the summer of 1965
he was the oldest of his generation
and the youngest to die at 13 years old
he and my mother used to sing "I'll Follow the Sun"
by the Beatles on old family reels
it shook up the entire family and my cousin
Karen was born later in life to my
great Aunt Dixie and great Uncle Bill.
Billy would have been a contender like
our great grandfather was for the major leagues,
a champion taken away from me ever
getting to meet him as an adult male role model,
my mother crying as she sang "to see I've gone"
in her sobbing rendition of the Lennon-McCartney
lyric while we clean off Billy's grave inside
Gate 17 of Rose Hills, another fallen champion
for my family to wonder what it would have
been like if Billy didn't get hit with that baseball,
what hearts would have been broken instead of his own.

Kevin Ridgeway

Sentinel

I am at high alert, poised
on an invisible perch
in a town near you.
No need for panic.
I watch the skies nightly
for evidence of attack,
my eyes peeled, my pupils
black olive dark. I do not blink.
I take this obligation seriously.
An implant in my left arm
releases sense vibrations
to the mother of machines
back at headquarters.
Think mood ring principle.
Thousands of tiny lights
are blinking in an otherwise
clear sky. They were not there
a moment ago. They are directly
above my head, in slow descent.
I feel nothing. Absolutely nothing.

barbara moore

BOB'S FOUR-WAY

We'd
been playin'
six plus hold'em
in the back room
at Felix Street Pub
just three hours before
Bare Knuckle Bob
got beat to death
with a four-way wrench
at the Riverview Retreat
and RV Park

And when word
finally leaked out
about who
did him in -

It was
two of
his own
goddamn kin -

All souped up
on hillbilly
heroin -

Just needin'
another fix -

N' they
sure as hell
didn't care
if they had
to kill their
ole Uncle Bob
to get
it

-K.W. Peery

Opposites Attract

Early midnight startle
from behind the curtain.
I have surprised darkness -
and not for the first time.
My presence unannounced
peeks out with force
seldom found in humans
at this time of night
unless boosted by
artificial means.
I am clean.
I am startle itself.
I am the anti-dark.
Darkness will love me.

barbara moore

One Morning in May

To do something
right, you need to
consult with your
doctor. To know
the exact place in
your body where
your heart is. Sad,
depressed, without
the means to pay
your debts, the loss
of your beloved
sibling and all
your work destroyed
in a shipwreck,
what would you do?
Jose Asunción
Silva, Colombian
poet, shot himself
in the heart. Found
by the maid in
his bed, the gun
near his body.

Luis C.
berriozabal

WATCH OUT

Lean

erica says

those must have been lean years
as she hands me \$40 in a bar parking lot
for some books
in the middle of winter

like a drug deal
where nobody gets high

years spent reading in smoke filled bars
until time stopped

years when i stopped
to check my empty pockets
for music almost every night
walking home downtown
or along the greenbelt.

years of not eating all day
& going home alone

yeah it was a party

not much has changed.

John Dorsey

The Revolving Giant Eye Up Above Just Winked

His life revolves
around the three
basic meals, tele-
vision & sleep.

He has forgotten
all & everything.

Richard D. Houff

The Stone

The trains moved slow on Sunday,
and I liked walking a stretch of track
north of town

I never had a particular destination
in mind; the routine really didn't alter

The woods and river bordered the railroad
line with two trestle bridges

When you reached the first bridge
there were wild raspberry bushes
where several deer trails converged

The path veering left followed the river
and you'd eventually reach town

I always chose this one
because our home bordered the forest

The return was a heartbreaking event;
for me, going home was a horror movie
without the climactic finish

My steps became slow, and a quiet
desperation would take hold as I approached
the hell that was waiting inside

I had entered the fourth grade that year
with a full satchel of suicidal notions
dancing in my head

The bad thoughts would come to me
during those long and peaceful walks

One day, I was truly determined to throw
myself from the first bridge

My steps were slower than normal
while counting the ties I walked on

I remember looking down
so as not to trip

god's old playground

Because
it rolls

It was one of those grey and misty
days in early October without a hint of sun

Steadily moving forward toward my goal,
I noticed a bright and shiny stone half buried
in the gravel

I'm not sure why or what compelled me
to stop other than a fascination for beauty

I was determined to unearth
this little treasure by scratching and clawing
until it was loose

When I finally pulled the stone
from its resting place, what I found
was a beautiful agate with swirling lines
of color and a crystallized center

The gem was as large as my fist
and all thoughts of suicide became moot

It was as if I had struck the mother lode
in a gold mine

The stone proved to be quite magical;
whenever I felt sad or close to self-annihilation,
I would simply pick it up for the sheer joy
and happiness of cupping it in my hands

As the decades passed and the changes came;
the rock remained a safeguard against bad times

It's still with me, sitting next to the keyboard
as I type this final line

richard d. houff

The People in My Head Are Still There

Commotion she was born into
with elderly siblings
and crystal meth in her nose
the voices she hears
are distant mysterious strangers
she slaps around to get them
all too quiet in her precarious mind.

Kevin Ridgeway

65 Years Old

but it was not to be
her youth eternal
while I age
so much
she wouldn't
recognize me
I let go of
each balloon
I filled with
air today
and watched
them drift
upward
into the
sky tied
to her
birthday
banner
where
she is
blowing
out the sun
which is
the candle
on the cake
the universe
has baked
for her in
a place
where
my arms
can never
reach her.

Kevin Ridgeway

Fallen Angel

devil-lover
i murdered you
into every crow-
looks like
i worship Satan
after all

eliana
vanessa E/♥



**A delicious
appeal
to unreason**

**Bless
its pointed
little head.**

RULES

For my birthday all I got was a swarm of flies. Did I sleep through the apocalypse? Awake now, my family's gone. What's it take to get passed the past? The memory of my mother's labored breathing rings inside my ears. Some nights I dream of hiding in her belly like it's a diving bell descending into the sea. Life can make up all kinds of random rules: never eat two burritos within twenty-four hours; the reader is always in the future; only one suicide per family per decade. My housemate says she killed forty flies in her room yesterday. In the middle of the night, she texts me that she can still hear them moving inside the walls. When I pocket dial the dead, the sound of ocean waves crashes out of my pants. I don't remember the last words my father said to me, but I know there's only one way to stop having birthdays and that's to die.

The River's Womb

I came from the river's womb.
The Nile spit me out and has
destroyed my confidence.
I want the knife of redemption
to spill my blood for the gods;
to fill their thirst and hopefully
one of the gods will take me
as their queen. I have been

chosen before only to be tossed
aside like some mortal being.
I am ready for a second chance.
I will submerge myself into
the depths of the river's womb.

*luis cuauhtémoc
berriozabal*

brandon freels

**"I did not
really
care if
only I
could die
without
much
pain."**

Poem in Which I've Checked into a Special Motel for the Mentally Disturbed

I'm a week long guest at this five star motel
where I have cable television
and more privileges
at this club med psych ward i've check into
upon than I do out in the world
learning of my girl's early check out
and a living girl came to visit me
carrying a Gideon Bible
smitten with the tease I was
in our escapist late night
conversations that have
led her to pray for me
and a speedy check out
from this motel for lost souls
where i am less a guest
than a member of one
crazy tribe of dreamers
who've been locked out
of their rooms for the night
in a place where the bill
is always covered
and we heal long enough
to have the nerve to go out
there and check in to
the secret roadside world
she showed me until my
dying breaths render
no more wake up calls.

Kevin Ridgeway

grief 2
there is no hidden
message here.
that is what i was
most hoping for.

- kevin m. hibshman

sun-possessed

the sun followed me

into a gazebo today,

my eyes, almost closed,

felt the weight of his rays

as they snuck,

through latticework,

to highlight the demons

in my dreams,

the golden beams,

like pendulums,

measured rhythms

for lullabies, hummed,

in a sleep-like stupor,

disguised as death,

dulling my skull,

controlling the breath,

of so many shadows,

outstretched,

and made to dance,

in the palm of his brilliant hand.

eliana Vanessa

high treason

it was
supposed
to
work.

it didn't.

so few
left.

so few
to undo
the
gargantuan
mess.

have you ever
let yourself
in
on
what it is
you really
want?

- kevin
m. hibshman

DISCOVER THE
SWINGING WORLD

hunter's moon

swampy blues,
worn shoes,

roach that searches
the cabinet for food,

dance with me
in the kitchen,

Under no roof,
crumbs on a spoon -
our feast but the swoon
of a splendid super moon.

Fallen Sparrows, Fallen Wings

Fallen sparrows,
fallen wings,
I am speechless
Who will sing?

Beneath the earth
rest their bones,
fallen sparrows,
dead and gone.

The hunter lurks,
in his home,
striking deals with
polluters,

easing rules and
restrictions
to allow them
to dirty

up the air and
waterways.
We will all fall
soon enough.

New Orleans

There was this small café on St. Charles
just south of the hotel with the same name

I would always stop for "French Market" coffee,
a dark roasted chicory blend that went down easy

The waitress liked me, and she'd put cream with sugar
in the cup while pouring the brew at the counter,
spoon-stirring it smooth

She'd laugh like hell and say, "that's what we call
community coffee!"

Sometimes she would come home with me
and everything was good

I was staying in a carriage house loft
behind a rundown old mansion

My place was a quiet hovel
surrounded by flower gardens and shade trees

There were no neighbors on either side
—only silence, overwhelming and lonely

And then I'd hear that great big belly laugh
coming down the path with her hollering up
towards me and the stars, "I guess you ain't
so bad for being a damn Yankee!"

Her visits were never without welcome

richard d. houff

I Sent You a Poem

I sent you a poem today
after cutting it up
stanza by line by word.
Now you'll have
something to do —
a puzzle to solve —
moving the pieces around,
restructuring history,
keeping the kinks out
of your finger joints
knotted — locked
in place and time.

barbara moore

EV  PIOUS

She was
standin'
on the
sidewalk
in front
of Maywood
Baptist Church

Wearin' a
sandwich
board sign
that said -

'Best get
your soul right
for Jesus' -

So I opened
my goddamn
moonroof
n' cranked
'Hellraiser' -

Until I
was sure
her pious
old ass
could
feel it

Luis Cuauhtémoc Berriozábal

-K.W. Peery



Book Reviews

John Dorsey, Your Daughter's Country, Blue Horse Press, 2019. This poetry book is like a series of picture postcards that illustrate the dark side of the American dream for those who inherit the nightmare. Dorsey has honed his poems into sharp vignettes, visionary yet terse with no wasted words. He draws upon his own lineage as the characters are mostly family members or other intimates. I feel the close connection he shares with them makes the work even more honest and absorbing. A prolific and accomplished writer, if you haven't read him yet, I urge you to do so.

Luke Kuzmish, Little Hollywood, Alien Buddha Press, 2018. Exploring life's contradictions while battling one's addictions is often grist for memorable poetry and this book does not disappoint. Redemption or the quest for it seems to be the vision here and the poems are rich with imagery and dark humor that seduce the reader and satisfy also. I look forward to seeing more work from Kuzmish and recommend checking out this fine book.

Spaghetti and poetry

book reviews
continue →

book reviews / cont'd...

Margaret Bazzell-Crocker, When I Was A Girl Like Me, Stubborn Mule Press, 2019.

Bazzell-Crocker turns her gifts loose in this statement of purpose that reads like a no-holds-barred autobiography spun from the very fibers of her being. I was drawn in by the title and blown away by the unflinching passion and sheer power of the poetry. I don't know what else to say except get a copy of this important book NOW.



ROMANTIC INTERMISSIONS

800 Witnesses

It was like a flare, a cheap firework
bright, very fast
high and shooting past
the rooftops of my neighbors,

a flash of spiraling light
of hard and luminous white,
twirling through the humid summer night
like a roman candle launched from the beach
at a fourth of july clambake.

(The phone rang.
It was my daughter, calling to see if I could pick her up from her friend's house.)

Another flash from straight out of the water,
then two showers of flames
spreading over the water, my ocean.

I told them I saw something
a missile or something
but maybe I didn't see anything.

I'm certain of it, though, that flash of light, a missile
or something.
I know I saw it but maybe I didn't.

And now?
It's only a poem.

mark montimurro

Most.
Friday nights
I would sit
outside
Speedy's
Convenience
n' wait
for ole man
Thompson
to slide by
for a fresh
fifth of
Wild Turkey

He had a
standin'
bar gig
at Bill's Pub
on the
South side
and would
usually throw
a few bucks
my way
just to help
him keep
the goddamn
drunks
off stage

N' far away
from that
55 Gibson
Super 400

during his
prolonged
romantic
intermissions

death, freed

a skull

scores rust,

opening scars

for the heavenly

part of art,

his brush moves over me,

a canvas, bloodletting,

meant to sedate

an all too familiar scene of hatred,

my body, admittedly,

winces with delight

as his gestures compete

with the medium of time,

in ruins of coffins, between us,

hues continuing to spread,

as if across a deathbed

that begs for more space.

eliana vanessa

*k.w.
peery*

i get so dizzy and then the rain comes. crawling through fog or knowing at wind. where one sick dream ends for yet another to begin. they're not even trying to look human anymore. my vision thickens in the dark, scatters into a million pieces with the light. i remem-ber vague shapes fighting to define themselves. drugs they gave us to make us forget. Where are you now? What is now and how do we get back to something that resembles sanity? -kevin m. hibshman
WAR

When I'm gone, plant these action figures in the garden and they'll blossom into nuclear bombs. This is how the third world war will start: organically. Pucker your mouth against the map on my cheek then take a bite. (Yum yum, you'll daydream.) If you look both ways before crossing your eyes you'll see a dachshund shitting in the middle of the road. Traffic will halt as little men pick up the turds and put them in a casket draped with American flags. The casket is both a doorway and a mouth. It speaks: "Your journey begins here!" Death is like diving into a bright blue ocean that is also a blood red sky. Life defies harmony. The only time anyone asks me for directions is when I don't know where I am.

Without You

I place this bookmark
through your heart.

I want to move you someday
with all my strength
to all the places I want to go

with you. A world without you
is a world I don't want
to live in. Curled like ball,
curled in a corner, that's
all I'll be without you.

luis cuauhtémoc
berriozabal

brandon freels

cotton mouth hush

he came quickly
into the brush -

left every part
of me hollerin'

dear god,

please save me

from my SORRYS,

cause hell ain't

big enough for two.

eliana vanessa

EV♥

Science Shrinks Hemorrhoids

"The
cannibalism gave me the impression
that I was doing something wrong."

grief - 3
see the naive
run foolishly,
smiles wide
arms outstretched as
they wave up to
the big black
sun burning
into a molten
sky
- Kevin M. Hibshman

DOUBLE

Why me? It's survival of the fittest or at least survival of the one who throws the most fits. This is not a shout out to my doppelgänger. It's a list of ways I might die: a stroke, a heart attack, suicide, being crushed under the tires of a city bus. A great writer once said writing about your dreams is cheating, but for me, writing isn't a game where you win or lose. I have these recurring dreams that I'm Winona Ryder standing before a broken mirror. But some nights I look in the mirror and instead I see Sigourney Weaver. At a bar on Myrtle, this dude introduces himself to me twice. He shakes my hand twice. He buys me two drinks. Don't you have some dialectical behavior therapy to do? I lie down on a coffin-shaped couch. The room is so swampy, I can't even set it on fire. You, the reader, are my analyst. Poseidon cuts the humidity into giant pizza-shaped slices and eats them. After the storm, I get a text that my doppelgänger was struck by lightning. Luck is a pair of golden boots rising out of the fork in the road like Excalibur.

brandon freels

The Unexpected Beauty of
Tearing Things Apart

"I am a grown-
up. But I am
like you. I am
scared of noises."

Color Theory in the Summer of 1980

Anything with Feathers

my grandfather taught me
how to shoot at empty beer cans
how to laugh
when things got tough

he hated banks
& doctors

loved chocolate covered cherries
chipped ham & potato chips on sundays

when they chopped off his legs
he started making hook rugs
with ducks in every pattern
until his vision went

even then
sometimes he would close his eyes
real tight

& flap his arms

up & down

up & down

he was donald duck
he was charles lindbergh

he slept with one eye open
in a hospital bed
in the middle of his living room

he squeezed my hand
& told me not to work too hard
it wasn't worth it

he said anything with feathers
could fly.

John Dorsey

on the news all they talked about was the hostage crisis
ronald reagan looked like john wayne
with whiter teeth or the ghost of gig young
coming back to bring our boys home
from the past

i drank donald duck grapefruit juice
& made war with plastic army men
on our green shag carpet almost every night
until the sun went down

we always freed the hostages
we always waved the flag
unless i got sleepy

like one night
when i spilled juice
all over the tv

red
white
&
blue

suddenly became blue & green bars
on every channel

my father refused to replace it
for at least 10 years

it was perfectly good

by then the hostages really were free
& my men were buried in the backyard
or taken away in garbage bags

the summer sun was sticky
& blood was the color
it was always

supposed to be.

John Dorsey

restive spearthrowers

